



## **Part 1: News Analysis**

### **Issue 28 (2008)**

### **July 4-10, 2008**

On July 4-5, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev was received in Ashgabat with pomp and circumstance as well as endless declarations of friendship from his counterpart, Turkmen President Berdymukhamedov, based on shared culture and geographical location, as well as mutual strategic interests. Yet the Russian leader left without an agreement on a market rate for Turkmen gas in 2009. Despite extensive meetings with Gazprom officials in recent months, President Berdymukhamedov has held out on a price and will likely continue to do so until he gets a better offer, meeting demonstratively with a variety of other existing and potential partners such as South Korea. The Turkmen president met with the South Korean economic minister this week and confirmed a bilateral economic commission as well as a scheduled meeting with South Korean President Lee Myung Bak during the Chinese Olympics and a visit to Seoul in the fall.

Russia seemed confident that it could afford to wait. While Berdymukhamedov makes smaller agreements such as the pledge of 10 billion cubic meters of gas to the EU in 2009, or offers of three offshore gas fields to prospect to South Korea, he is mindful that Russia is his main bilateral and regional partner and works assiduously to maintain all facets of the relationship. President Medvedev circumscribed Turkmenistan's bargaining position with the acceleration of the construction of the tripartite Caspian pipeline with Kazakhstan and mention of the commitment to the existing 25-year-agreement with Turkmenistan with promises to order even more gas in the future. This week during President Medvedev's trip, Turkmenneft and Tatneft of Tatarstan signed an agreement for future working visits; Tatarstan is the Russian region President Berdymukhamedov visited last week and with which Ashgabat has developed close working ties, using its drilling equipment for hydrocarbon exploration.

While of lesser significance, agreements on culture, education, information security and cooperation continue to bind Turkmenistan closest of all to Russia. Both Western and Russian analysts agree that President Medvedev is continuing his predecessors' line and consolidating Russia's hold over energy routes in Central Asia, despite setbacks. Russian leaders appear confident that they will eventually get an acceptable price arrangement with Turkmenistan and dissuade Turkmenistan from joining the Western-backed Nabucco pipeline, as Russian presidential aide Sergei Prikhodko commented, "after the gradual transition to world prices, the issue of the reorientation of these flows to other countries will be removed from the agenda." Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany met with President Berdymukhamedov on July 9 to discuss Nabucco and Hungary's interest in purchasing Turkmen gas. Ashgabat itself has made no definitive announcement about its commitment to Nabucco.

Following condemnation of a round-up of journalists before a sensitive EU-Turkmenistan human rights dialogue last week, Ashgabat unexpectedly reversed course and released RFE/RL commentator Sazak Durdymuradov from a psychiatric hospital, notorious for holding critics of the Turkmen regime. The U.S., which had publicly criticized the arrest last week, welcomed the release and urged Turkmenistan to comply with international human rights. However, no word was available about the status of other jailed civil society activists and political opposition figures.

Educational reforms continue apace, with some 2,200 students now slated to study abroad next year in Russia, China, Malaysia and Turkey. At least 500 are on assignment from government ministries, and all are encouraged to study subjects of direct benefit to the Turkmen state, mainly in the oil and gas, textile and finance sectors as well as in international relations. While Internet access remains restricted for ordinary

citizens, the Turkmen state is utilizing new electronic data-collection technology with the introduction of a biometrics passport, enabling greater control of the movement of Turkmen residents.

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### 1. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### a. Russian President Medvedev Meets with Turkmen President Berdymukhamedov

**Original title:** *Turkmenistan-Russia: New Approaches to Implementation of the Profound Potential of Co-Operation Are Specified*

**Source:** Official government website/Turkmen State News Agency/07/05/08. Excerpt by OSI Turkmenistan Project

**Full version:** <http://www.turkmenistan.gov.tm/en/?idr=1&id=080705a>

[Passages omitted: on greeting Russian President Dmitry Medvedev at the Ashgabat airport.]

The RF governmental delegation was composed of the heads of the largest regions of Russia with which Turkmenistan had built reliable bridges of co-operation: President Mintimer Shaymoev of the Republic of Tatarstan, President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov of the Republic of Kalmykia; St. Petersburg Governor Valentina Matvienko and Governor Aleksandr Zhilkin of the Astrakhan Oblast; senior officials of the key ministries and departments of the Russian Federation; and top managers of Russia's large companies such as Gazprom, Lukoil, Tatneft. A large group of Russian journalists representing the leading electronic and print mass media arrived in Turkmenistan.

[Passages omitted: on President Berdymukhamedov's greetings and expression of gratitude for trade with Russia, particularly in the oil and gas sector.]

At present, 113 enterprises with the share of the Russian capital operated in the country and 116 projects were implemented in collaboration with the Russian companies, President Berdymukhamedov said expressing belief that they would increase in number. The Turkmen leader said that the key trends of Turkmen-Russian co-operation included partnership in the fuel and energy sector that, in the partners' opinion, by its significance goes beyond the bounds of the trade and economic relations. Establishing the reliable infrastructure ensuring uninterrupted natural gas supply stood as a backbone element of global energy security. In this regard the Caspian gas pipeline project implemented on the trilateral basis with participation of Turkmenistan, Russia and Kazakhstan acquired particular importance, the Turkmen leader said. The Russian companies actively collaborated with Turkmenistan by rendering maintenance services, delivering fuel and energy equipment and machinery, studying the feasibility of exploration and development of the hydrocarbon deposits in the Turkmen sector of the Caspian Sea.

Along with partnership in the fuel and energy sector, Turkmenistan was interested in developing co-operation in establishing an effective international transport infrastructure promoted by the construction of the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran trunk railway with an outlet to the seaports of the Persian Gulf and southern Europe. The project initiated by Turkmenistan considerably benefited Russia, which would connect its railway network to the main line. Turkmenistan was highly interested in establishing regular train ferry service on the routes Turkmenbashi-Astrakhan, Turkmenbashi-Makhachkala. Turkmen-Russian co-operation in the sphere of communication, in particular mobile telephone communication, was successfully developed.

[Passages omitted: on increasing direct business contacts, on Turkmenistan's cooperation with Tatarstan; on the development of humanitarian, educational and cultural ties.]

The Turkmen leader focused on co-operation in the sphere of education, in particular training highly qualified specialists at institutions of higher education in the Russian Federation. Noting Turkmenistan's intention to increase the number of Turkmen students studying at Russian institutes and universities, President Berdymukhamedov said that the opening of a branch of the I. M. Gubkin Russian State University of Oil and Gas in Ashgabat would be an important step in this field. The Turkmen leader said that during talks with President Medvedev emphasis was put on creating a legal framework for mutual recognition of educational certification that would systematize partnership in this important field.

[Passages omitted: on cooperation within the framework of the CIS and Turkmenistan's initiatives on the forum for CIS agricultural producers; on cooperation in drafting and adopting the Convention of the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea; on additions to the existing 108 intergovernmental agreements between Turkmenistan and Russia; on the work of the intergovernmental economic commission.]

Specifying the range of the issues considered during the talks with the president of Turkmenistan, President Medvedev said that substantial discussion of large-scale projects, in particular in the gas sector and specifically acceleration of the agreements on construction of the Caspian gas pipeline and modernization of the gas transportation facilities in the Central Asian region, had taken place. Noting that the sphere of transport was an important field of co-operation the RF President called for accelerated drafting the Agreement on the establishment of the direct railway car ferry among the Astrakhan water-transport network, Makhachkala and Turkmenbashi. President Medvedev focused on intense Russian business interest in the very promising Turkmen market that was proved by the Russian delegation composed of businessmen and top managers of large companies. The RF President said that many Russian companies actively collaborated with the Turkmen partners that benefited bilateral co-operation, economies and development of both countries stating that these contacts would be fostered and expected to intensify.

Dmitry Medvedev focused on the power industry and machine-building as very promising fields of co-operation covered during the talks during the Turkmen leader's visit to the Republic of Tatarstan. The RF President said that the opening the KAMAZ Training Center in Ashgabat was an important event. The promising fields of partnership included the agro-industrial sector. In this regard, President Medvedev noted the intense interest in the forum and exhibition of CIS agricultural producers, which would take place in Ashgabat in 2009.

[Passage omitted: on the creation of new economic incentives for Turkmen-Russian collaboration; on scholarships for Turkmen students to study in Russia and the opening of Gubkin University branch in Ashgabat; on bilateral agreements signed on education, culture, broadcasting, information security and future cooperation; on the signing of a joint communiqué and press conference; on the Caspian pipeline project.]

"We reaffirmed our invariable adherence to the commitments undertaken under the Agreement of Turkmen natural gas exports to Russia till 2025," the Turkmen leader said. "Moreover, we emphasized that we have profound opportunities for Russian business, indicated by the increase of large companies and enterprises operating in Turkmenistan including Gazprom, Itera, KAMAZ, MTS, Siberian Airlines, Silovye Mashiny and many others."

[Passages omitted: on cooperation with Russian regions; on closing remarks and expression of gratitude; on increased opportunities for Russian companies consolidated in the Turkmen market such as Gazprom, Itera, KAMAZ, Stroytransgaz, Pipe Metallurgical Company; on the National Exhibition of Russia in August in Ashgabat.]

Dmitry Medvedev specified humanitarian contacts, which had progressed substantially in recent years as the key trend of co-operation. In this regard Dmitry Medvedev expressed special gratitude to President Berdymukhamedov. In particular, the Protocol on the establishment of a branch of the I. M. Gubkin Russian State University of Oil and Gas in Ashgabat had been signed, the RF President said. Dmitry Medvedev said that Russia expected the bilateral humanitarian contacts to be joined by the multilateral contacts in the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

[Passages omitted: on cooperation with the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Ashgabat; on the visit by President Medvedev to various landmarks and monuments, including the mausoleum of Saparamurat Niyazov, and the presentation to him of the traditional gift of a Turkmen horse].

## **b. Russia Consolidates Grip Over Central Asian Energy**

**Original title:** *Russian President in Turkmenistan to Consolidate Kremlin's Grip on Central Asian Energy*

**Source:** *International Herald Tribune/Associated Press/07/04/08. Synopsis by OSI Turkmenistan Project*

**Full version:** <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/07/04/business/AS-Turkmenistan-Russia-Caspian-Energy.php>

**Synopsis:** Russian President Medvedev moved to consolidate Moscow's monopoly on energy transit from Central Asia by urging the acceleration of the development of the Caspian gas pipeline, AP reported. President Medvedev, a former chairman of Russia's state-controlled Gazprom, met with Turkmen President Berdymukhamedov, who reaffirmed Turkmenistan's pledge to continue selling most of its gas through Russia through 2025. The two leaders issued a joint communiqué stating that a tripartite agreement on the construction of the new Caspian pipeline would begin "in the near future", following the completion of formalities between Russia, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan.

Russia reached a preliminary agreement with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan in December 2007 to build the Caspian pipeline along the Caspian Sea coast, frustrating European plans to construct an alternative trans-Caspian pipeline via Azerbaijan and Turkey to deliver to Western markets. While Europe made progress recently in obtaining a pledge from Turkmenistan to deliver 10 billion cubic meters of gas in 2009, it cannot access more gas without Russia's consent. Russia is offering to buy more Turkmen gas at European prices to circumvent the EU.

"After the gradual transition to world prices the issue of the reorientation of these flows to other countries will be removed from the agenda," AP quoted presidential aide Sergei Prikhodko.

## **c. Turkmenistan Not to Bypass Russia on Oil and Gas Exports: Russian Analyst**

**Original title:** *Medvedev: Oil and Gas Tour Before G8 Summit*

**Source:** *RIA-Novosti/en.rian.ru/07/07/07*

**Full version:** <http://en.rian.ru/analysis/20080707/113457750.html>

**Synopsis:** President Medvedev visited the major Caspian oil-and-gas-producing states of Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan before the meeting of the G8, RIA Novosti reported, offering Azerbaijan as well as Turkmenistan a larger purchase of gas at market rates; however he was unable to reach a price agreement.

"It is important for Russia to acquire Turkmen gas to compete with the alternative European Nabucco pipeline project," RIA Novosti analyst Andrei Vavra wrote. RIA Novosti quoted Russian presidential aide Sergei Prikhodko as saying that Turkmenistan will not take part in Nabucco's construction. "Judging by events, Russia has prevailed over its European rivals in the struggle for Turkmen gas," Vavra commented. "It is now clear that oil and gas from these energy-rich countries will not bypass Russia."

## **d. President Berdymukhamedov Receives Hungarian Prime Minister**

**Original title:** *Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov Attends Celebration of 10th Anniversary of Astana*

**Source:** *turkmenistan.ru/07/06/08. Synopsis by OSI Turkmenistan Project*

**Full version:** <http://uk.reuters.com/article/oilRpt/idUKL1028773220080710>

**Synopsis:** President Berdymukhamedov received Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany July 9 in Ashgabat, Reuters reported. Sources close to the talks said the Prime Minister raised the Nabucco pipeline deal and Hungary's interest in purchasing Turkmen gas with the Turkmen leader, the outlet reported.

## **e. President Berdymukhamedov Attends 10th Anniversary Celebration in Astana**

**Original title:** Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov Attends Celebration of 10th Anniversary of Astana

**Source:** [turkmenistan.ru/07/06/08](http://turkmenistan.ru/07/06/08). Synopsis by OSI Turkmenistan Project

**Full version:** [http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page\\_id=3&lang\\_id=en&elem\\_id=13174&type=event&sort=date\\_desc](http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page_id=3&lang_id=en&elem_id=13174&type=event&sort=date_desc)

**Synopsis:** President Berdymukhamedov took part in a celebration of the 10th anniversary of Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, on July 5, [turkmenistan.ru](http://turkmenistan.ru) reported. The meeting was attended by leaders of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Turkey, and Tajikistan.

## **f. U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat Welcomes Release of RFE/RL Commentator**

**Source:** U.S. Embassy—Ashgabat/Press Statement. Via email/07/08/08

We welcome the release and return to his family of Sazak Durdymuradov.

We encourage the government of Turkmenistan to adhere to its international human rights obligations as enshrined in the 1948 United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

## **g. OSCE Centre Training in Turkmenistan on Micro-irrigation Systems**

**Original title:** OSCE Centre Organizes Training Course in Turkmenistan on Micro-irrigation Systems

**Source:** OSCE Press Centre/07/04/08.

**Full version:** <http://www.osce.org/item/32049.html>

A training course on designing, operating and maintaining micro-irrigation systems in Turkmenistan, organized by the OSCE Centre, concluded July 4 in Ashgabat. The three-week project was implemented by the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat in co-operation with Turkmenistan's Foreign Ministry, and the Water Resources and Agriculture Ministries.

"Given that agriculture consumes a significant quantity of Turkmenistan's water resources and substantially contributes to its economy, optimizing water use in irrigation through the development of water saving technologies and practices is crucial to the country's future," said Ambassador Ibrahim Djikic, the Head of the OSCE Centre.

During the first week, an international expert met with farmers and water users in the Ahal and Lebap regions to explore current irrigation systems in place. The field trips were followed by two weeks of in-class discussions on best practices for implementation of micro-irrigation and other irrigation technologies and strategies used in OSCE participating States, and the potential for their application in Turkmenistan. Experts from Turkmenistan's regional and municipal water utilities, farmers' associations, agronomists and university faculty took part in the events, which were held at the Agribusiness School in Turkmenabad, and the Agricultural University in Ashgabat.

The OSCE Centre in Ashgabat will continue to support the Government of Turkmenistan in its efforts to promote water resources security.

## **2. DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS**

### **a. RFE/RL Turkmen Contributor Released Home From Detention**

**Original title:** RFE/RL Turkmen Contributor Released From Detention

**Source:** RFE/RL/07/05/08. Copyright (c) 2008. RFE/RL, Inc. Reprinted with the permission of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 1201 Connecticut Ave., N.W. Washington DC 20036.

**Full version:** [http://www.rferl.org/content/RFERL\\_Turkmen\\_Contributor\\_Released\\_From\\_Detention\\_/1181825.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/RFERL_Turkmen_Contributor_Released_From_Detention_/1181825.html)



RFE/RL commentator Sazak Durdymuradov has been released following two weeks of detention in Turkmenistan. The move came amid growing pressure on Turkmen authorities to release Durdymuradov from a remote psychiatric hospital known as the "Turkmen Gulag." An Ashgabat correspondent for RFE/RL's Turkmen Service spoke to Durdymuradov's family, who confirmed his return home to the town of Baharden on July 4.

"Yesterday, exactly at the same time he had gone, after two weeks, my father returned home," Durdymuradov's son, Atajan, told RFE/RL. "His health is very good. My father thanks all human rights organizations and wishes them success in their work." Durdymuradov, a soft-spoken history teacher, had been working for two months as a nonpaid contributor to RFE/RL's Turkmenistan broadcasts when secret police seized him from his home on June 20.

According to information received by RFE/RL, Durdymuradov was severely beaten and tortured with electroshock after refusing to sign a letter pledging never again to take part in RFE/RL broadcasts. He was then transferred to a remote psychiatric hospital in the eastern region of Lebap, a facility notorious for holding critics of the Turkmen regime.

International human rights groups, including Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and the Committee to Protect Journalists, have condemned Durdymuradov's arrest and ill treatment, and called for his immediate release. The U.S. State Department had also expressed concern about Durdymuradov's case, saying it was "deeply troubled" by his detention and physical abuse. Spokesman Tom Casey said on June 28 that "any attempt to threaten journalists is an unacceptable affront to human rights."

In a report issued on June 23, Amnesty International said Turkmen authorities regularly target independent journalists, including RFE/RL correspondents, in an attempt to silence independent voices.

## **b. More Turkmen Students Allowed to Study At Home and Abroad**

**Original title:** *The Best Universities of the World for Education*

**Source:** Official government website/Turkmen State News Agency/07/02/08. Translation and synopsis by OSI Turkmenistan Project

**Full version:** <http://www.turkmenistan.gov.tm/?idr=9&id=080702b>

**Synopsis:** Turkmen students have until July 19 to apply for a place in university, under President Berdymukhamedov's new reforms providing increased opportunities for students. More than 2,200 Turkmen students are slated to study abroad in the last year, primarily in Russia, Turkey, Malaysia, and China, 500 of whom are assigned by various government ministries. The Turkmen government provides loans or scholarships from ministries and guarantees jobs in the diplomatic corps and in various agencies for some of the students upon completion of their studies.

Turkmenistan has signed agreements with more than 35 universities in Russia for acceptance of Turkmen students, including the Russian State Technological University (MATI) in Moscow; the Moscow State Textile University, the St. Petersburg State Electrotechnical University (LETI); the Kazan State University; and various medical schools and universities for the humanities. In Turkey, Turkmen students have an opportunity to study over 70 subjects, mainly in areas deemed to be priorities for the Turkmen national economy, such as the oil and gas sector. Turkmen students are also studying silk production and Eastern medicine in China and information technology and engineering in Malaysia.

Acceptance at universities will take place upon successful completion of three entrance exams from July 23 to August 14. Work experience is among the criteria for selection of applicants.

Next year, there will be 4,000 first-year university students in Turkmenistan, 385 more than last year. They will have the opportunity to study 18 new subjects, including at a newly-opened Institute for International Relations.

### **c. Turkmenistan Introduces Biometric Passports**

**Original title:** Chronicle

**Source:** Official Turkmen government website/07/09/08. Translation by OSI Turkmenistan Project.

**Electronic version:** <http://www.turkmenistan.gov.tm/?idr=1&id=080709a>

In order to further strengthen Turkmenistan's friendly relations with foreign countries and increase mutually-profitable trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural cooperation, and to ensure the guarantee of the lawful rights of Turkmen citizens to freely leave for other states and return to Turkmenistan, and also in compliance with the President of Turkmenistan's Decree No. 7165 of March 26, 2005, the President of Turkmenistan has issued a special Decree. The Decree mandates the introduction of biometric data in the passport of Turkmen citizens starting July 10, 2008 for exit and entry from Turkmenistan. Valid passports of citizens of Turkmenistan will remain in force for exit and entry until July 10, 2013.

### **d. Turkmen Chewing Tobacco Users Face Fines Up to \$17,000 Dollars**

**Source:** ITAR-TASS/07/08/08. Translation and synopsis by OSI Turkmenistan Project

**Full version:** <http://www.ami-tass.ru/article/37938.html>

**Synopsis:** Russia's ITAR-TASS reports that Turkmenistan has made the use and storage of *nas*, a form of chewing tobacco that is a mild stimulant, a criminal offense. *Nas* or *nasvay* is popular in Central Asia. In Turkmenistan, those found storing, transporting or selling the substance will be subject to a fine from three to 30 minimum wages (currently US \$50-\$500 dollars). Repeat offenders could face a fine from 50 to 100 average wages, or \$8600-\$17,300, or could face up to two years of correctional labor or one year of prison.

According to ITAR-TASS, Turkmen authorities have justified the measure on health grounds, as *nas* is believed to cause digestive ailments and increase the risk of cancer.

## **3. ECONOMIC NEWS**

### **a. South Korea To Develop Hydrocarbon Fields on Turkmen Shelf of Caspian Sea**

**Original title:** South Korea Plans to Develop Hydrocarbon Fields on Turkmen Shelf of Caspian Sea

**Source:** [turkmenistan.ru/07/06/08](http://turkmenistan.ru/07/06/08). Synopsis by OSI Turkmenistan Project

**Full version:** [http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page\\_id=3&lang\\_id=en&elem\\_id=13185&type=event&sort=date\\_desc](http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page_id=3&lang_id=en&elem_id=13185&type=event&sort=date_desc)

**Synopsis:** The Republic of Korea established a special consortium of the largest Korean companies to develop oil and gas fields on the Turkmen shelf of the Caspian Sea, Li Young Ho, South Korean minister of economic information said during a meeting with President Berdymukhamedov in Astana on July 6, [turkmenistan.ru](http://turkmenistan.ru) reported. The Turkmen president is said to have offered South Korea three fields for development. A bilateral intergovernmental commission will hold a meeting in Ashgabat in August.

The Turkmen leader is scheduled for a visit to Seoul in the fall of 2008 and President Berdymukhamedov and South Korean President Lee Myung Bak plan to meet during the Olympic Games in China.

### **b. Turkmenneft and Tatneft to Exchange Working Visits**

**Original title:** Turkmenneft and Tatneft Working Groups to Exchange Visits

**Source:** [turkmenistan.ru/07/09/08](http://turkmenistan.ru/07/09/08). Synopsis by OSI Turkmenistan Project

**Full version:** [http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page\\_id=3&lang\\_id=en&elem\\_id=13200&type=event&sort=date\\_desc](http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page_id=3&lang_id=en&elem_id=13200&type=event&sort=date_desc)

**Synopsis:** Under an agreement signed on July 4 during Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's trip to Ashgabat, Turkmenneft, the Turkmen state oil and gas concern, and Tatneft, the open joint stock petroleum company of Tatarstan, will exchange working-level visits, [turkmenistan.ru](http://turkmenistan.ru) reported. The two companies plan to explore prospects for Tatneft to provide more equipment for work at the Goturdepe, Gumdag, and Guyik fields in Turkmenistan. Eventually, Tatarneft plans to construct oil pipelines and supply conducts in cooperation with Turkmenneft, under the supervision of Tatarstan's specialists.

Turkmenneft has already put into operation the first consignment of oil equipment supplied and installed by Tatneft in June.

*Unless otherwise indicated, all translations have been prepared by OSI's Turkmenistan Project.*

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